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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 001335

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SUBJECT: RAJOUB REPORTEDLY CLAIMING BROAD POWERS, SUCCESSES

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

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This message was coordinated with ConGen Jerusalem.

1. (C) SUMMARY: Track II activists Boaz Karni and Dov Sedaka recounted to the Ambassador March 2 claims by recent PA National Security Advisor Jibril Rajoub of his own pivotal role and organizational successes within the Palestinian government and security operations. Karni said that in a lengthy meeting with Rajoub the previous day, Rajoub had detailed what he claimed were his successful efforts to prevent -- "almost alone" -- the establishment of Abu Ala'a's first proposed government. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Track II activists Boaz Karni and Dov Sedaka, both associated with the Economic Cooperation Foundation, briefed the Ambassador March 2 on recent discussions, including a lengthy meeting the day before, with former PA National Security Advisor Jibril Rajoub. The three have worked together on various Track II activities in the past few years, including work on the recent Baker Institute paper on next steps in the peace process. According to Karni and Sedaka, Rajoub told the two that he would be occupying a pivotal role within the Palestinian government and security operations. Rajoub had described at some length what he claimed were his successful efforts -- "almost alone" -- to prevent the establishment of Abu Ala'a's first proposed government and influence the composition of the eventually approved government.

3. (C) Rajoub also predicted that he would continue as national security advisor, occupying a new office very close to that of President Abu Mazen, and serve as the "key contact" on security issues, all points that he claimed President Abu Mazen told General Ward during their February meeting. As for newly appointed Interior Minister MG Nasser Yusif, Rajoub reportedly said that Yusif's new responsibility is "too high for him (Yusif)." As such, Rajoub also told Karni, he (Rajoub) wants to establish contact with "the Americans." (Note: In a subsequent conversation, Karni told POL/C that Rajoub and Mohammed Dahlan are also worried that Yusif "does not understand the Israelis," and that they are "not sure he can handle meetings with the Israelis." They reportedly suggested that since Dahlan has removed himself from the security portfolio, Rajoub should find a way to accompany Yusif to any meetings with Israeli officials.) The Ambassador said he had no indication that Abu Mazen had advised Ward of either Rajoub's alleged appointment as national security advisor, or Rajoub's claimed primacy on security issues. Karni said Rajoub also claimed to be in dialogue with the Shin Bet.

4. (C) According to Karni, Rajoub also claimed to be the head of a new, super-empowered committee to conduct negotiations with the Israelis. Rajoub claimed that this body, which he dubbed "the real team," would include Abu Mazen, Abu Ala'a, Mohammed Dahlan, Nasser Yusif, Saeb Erekat, Akram Haniya, and Nabil Shaath, and possibly Nasser Al Qidwa and Hassan Asfour. Rajoub claimed to be "very proud" of his accomplishments to date, and according to Karni, said he wants to topple Abu Ala'a within three months.

5. (C) Rajoub also claimed to be working across borders and factions. He reportedly told Karni that now is the time to bring into a national dialogue all factions, because the Syrians are trouble. To that end, Rajoub said he would travel to Damascus March 6 and 7 to tell the Syrians to stop backing terrorist activities, and he claimed that he would be carrying the same message to Tehran in the near future. (Note: Karni told POL/C March 7 that Rajoub had postponed his Damascus trip for an indefinite period.) In an apparent contradiction, Rajoub also reportedly said that he was, in fact, postponing the national dialogue while engaging in preparations for the Arab summit in Cairo. Rajoub's aims there, he said, are to: gain support for the Palestinian "struggle," gain support for the new president and elected government, secure support for a return to the roadmap, and gain support for a renewed Arab initiative concerning Palestine.

6. (C) Karni said that Rajoub seemed to have "quite a lot of information" on the February 5 terrorist bombing in downtown Tel Aviv, and claimed that Ziad Nakhleh, allegedly the deputy chief of Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Damascus, knew nothing about the attack. Karni said that Rajoub claimed, both in

their meeting and on television, that the attack was conducted independently, with no outside intervention, and that there had been total agreement within the Gaza Strip PIJ leadership to suspend attacks. Rajoub reportedly expressed sorrow at the deaths and injuries caused by the attack, but noted that the incident was the first in which the GOI gave the PA an opportunity to condemn an attack. Karni said that Jibril also cited what he claimed is a loss of stature by Hamas as a result of Syria's current weakness.

17. (C) Offering his own assessment, Karni said that if Rajoub and Dahlan, the original chiefs of the Preventive Security Organization branches in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively, can cooperate, they would be "the best team on security." (Note: During their respective tours as PSO chiefs, and since, Dahlan and Rajoub have been fierce competitors for power, including that arising from proximity to the late PA President Arafat, and for international connections and prestige. End Note).

18. (C) The Ambassador pointed out to Karni and Sedaka that the international community has two imperatives that sometimes conflict. The first is to make the Palestinian Authority act effectively against terror, and the second is to give Palestinian democratic institutions the chance to grow. Abu Mazen's designation of Nasser Yusif as Interior Minister is a demonstration of proper civilian control of security forces, he said, and it is hard to believe that Abu Mazen told General Ward to speak to Rajoub on security issues. If Abu Mazen determines that Rajoub is to participate on the Palestinian side in security talks, then the USG will deal with him, otherwise, the USG will deal with the designated security apparatus.

19. (C) The Ambassador stressed that the key issue is getting talks to resume sooner rather than later. He noted reports that Israel is ready to transfer to the PA security responsibility for Jericho and Tulkarm, and that the issues remaining on the table seem resolvable. Sedaka, an IDF reserve brigadier general with long experience in the Occupied Territories, responded that the GOI is being "too tough" on security points associated with the transfers and that an agreement already exists to guide the transfer. The Ambassador noted that the sides need to sit down and negotiate the points, he said.

110. (C) Karni and Sadaka noted their observation that the IDF in the West Bank has gotten tougher since the appointment of MG Yair Naveh as head of the Central Command. They noted that previous Central Commander MG Moshe Kaplinski had instructed his troops to refrain from any entry into Area A and from almost any entry into Area B. Naveh immediately reversed that order, and IDF troops have been conducting numerous operations within those areas ever since.

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